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A CHALLENGE

by

Maitland Hardyman

Lt.-Col., D.S.O., M.C.

LONDON
GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN LTD
RUSKIN HOUSE, 40 MUSEUM ST., W.C.1

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Thomas Hardy

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FOREWORD

BY

NORMAN HUGH ROMANES

WHAT strikes us at once as remarkable about Colonel Hardyman's poems is their complete detachment from what we have been led to expect of war poetry as a whole, whether of the ' heroic ' school, or that truer and infinitely more significant class of young writers of whom Mr. Alec Waugh and Mr. Siegfried Sassoon are such admirable exponents.

No one will be misled into thinking of Maitland Hardyman as a poet at all equal to either of these artists in point of technical achievement; primarily he was not a poet at all.

His best utterances in this field remind me so poignantly of his actual conversation, when deeply moved or interested, that it is really in their revelation of his unique character that I find the chief value of his poems.

I have never seen or heard of a man to whom not merely a lie, even a harmless one, but any kind of misrepresentation, was so abhorrent. This uncompromising regard for truth often led him into difficulties with

people of less fine constitution, and caused him, as I well know, great suffering. He was the best possible refutation of the GREAT LIE he detested so ardently, that virtue is its own reward.

As will be seen from the poems themselves, he was a firm believer in the essential truth of Christianity as the revelation of Love to the world, of its eternal rejection and final victory in permeating and absorbing all things in human life of any worth by sacrifice and suffering.

On the other hand, he regarded, not with hatred or contempt, but with infinite pity, the mad, conflicting passions of the orthodox churches and established creeds, mutually destroying, with no determined end in view, powerless to hurt in reality any but themselves.

His true vocation was constructive, active service, on the battlefield as circumstances called him, in the councils of the nation, as we, his friends, fondly hoped. The brilliant record of his life at the front, first as adjutant, last as commanding officer of a battalion in which all ranks paid him nothing less than homage, is sufficient of itself to prove his contention of the indomitable power of an entirely spiritual personality in the most rigorously practical conditions of life.

I knew him best myself during the summer

of 1916 when, still in England as junior 2nd-lieutenant, junior to me both in age and rank, he was practically administrator of 60,000 troops. Theoretically he was 'attached' to the headquarters of a vast training centre; really it was through him that every detail of importance passed. He was trusted by superior officers and left alone.

It must not be forgotten that during the whole of his military career he was in constant correspondence with those at home whom it was most dangerous for him, from a military point of view, even to agree with, which he did openly, with no sort of regard for consequences. He was on the Council of the Union of Democratic Control and a personal friend of Mr. Ramsay Macdonald. His own epitaph he desired to end as follows: 'He died as he lived, fighting for abstract principles in a cause which he did not believe in.'

Was there, then, some contradiction in his character which might seem to vitiate its true heroism? I think not. He always professed strongly that his actions were absolutely consistent with his beliefs. While admiring the moral courage of many conscientious objectors, he was convinced that their attitude as a whole was tantamount to a refusal of the Cross.

He did not believe in fighting, that victory

would bring any nation ultimate good, or defeat ultimate harm, yet his vocation to the front line was not less categorical than that of the most ardent believer in the creed satirized with gentle yet convincing irony in '1914'—

'We are the one unconquerable power.'

Pleasure was a thing for which he felt no regard. Something was always occupying his morally critical attention, or outraging his almost morbid passion for justice. Only in hard and continuous labour did he, I think, ever find relaxation. Playful he could often be, yet he never seemed to forget altogether what lay in front of him.

If only some one of the many who worshipped him, believing him to be entirely beyond the ordinary, and who find it difficult to remember that he died at the age of twenty-three, could write of him as he was, with his complete absence of thought of himself or of personal acquisition in the face of what he conceived to be his duty, I feel sure it would be a valuable record for a world out of which the standard he aimed at and the goal he won alike seem to have vanished amid the chaos of dissolution on the one hand, and the madness of ill-concealed avarice on the other.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE
JOHN HAY MAITLAND HARDYMAN

BORN September 28th, 1894, in Bath.
Fettes College, Edinburgh, 1908 - 11. Open Scholar, 1909.
Edinburgh University, 1911-14. Arts Course.
Students' Representative Council, 1912-13-14.
Enlisted, 4th Somerset Light Infantry, August 20th, 1914.
R.F.C. training at Brooklands, December, 1914, to January, 1915.
Commission in 9th Somerset Light Infantry, February 5th, 1915.
Acting Adjutant, 7th Somerset Light Infantry, Wareham, 1915.
Attached Brigade Staff, Swanage, 1915.
Attached Divisional Staff, Salisbury, 1916.
Lieutenant and Adjutant, 8th Somerset Light Infantry, 1916.
Captain, April, 1917. Major, April, 1917.
Brigade Liaison Officer, 1917.
M.C. London Gazette, 18th July, 1917.
Attached Divisional Staff, Acting Brigade-Major, 37th Division, 1917-18.
Elected to Council of Union of Democratic Control, 1917.
Lieutenant-Colonel, May, 1918.
D.S.O., August 11th, 1918 (London Gazette, October 15th, 1918.
Killed in action, August 24th, 1918, at Biefvillers.
Buried in British Military Cemetery in Biefvillers, with full military honours, August 24th, 1918.

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THE YOUNG THINK ONLY OF THEMSELVES

THE young think only of themselves:
Thank God for that.
Mothers for others fret themselves:
Thank God for that.
Nature everywhere is seen
Writing Love in terms of green:
Thank God for that.
We, who cannot reason why,
Yet may put our doubting by;
If to live or if to die,
Making this alone our cry,
Thank God for that.

ON LEAVE

(February, 1915)

THE mad breeze laughs the clouds along,
The young ash shouts his clean-limbed song,
Nibbling green and chocolate slopes
Silvery brown the old hedge gropes,
I with wakening nature cry,
'Why should I die?' 'Why should I die?'

Out there it's different: we don't fear to die;
We kill, yet hate not, live, yet wonder why,
Till, worn with waiting, spent with ceaseless strain,
With present issues each man drugs his brain:

The daily letter's homely happenings,
Life's three-and-twenty unimportant things,
The third-back dug-out's need of strengthening,
How the deep mine is slowly lengthening,
Poor Freddie's death, the latest hand-grenade—
Of such is life in mud-bound Flanders made.

Is this, then, youth's fulfilment? Mothers all,
It was for this ye bore us: Duty's call,
Poor bleeding Belgium's honour, Austria's Duke!
The Jingo's clap-trap is his own rebuke. . . .

Get thee behind me, Satan. Well I know
That through self-sacrifice the soul must grow,
And that this testing time, this struggle sore,
Shall leave old England stronger than before.

I. THE WATERS OF MARAH

I.

GRACEFUL as a reed in moonlight,
Gladsome as a marigold,
I was Rahab, loved of lovers,
Life's clear streamlet, virgin bold.

But, alas, the laughing waters
Bubbled o'er their narrow bounds,
Turning into fevered marshes
All Love's hallowed pleasure grounds.

Soon the flowers grew less exotic
And were culled by rougher hands,
Everywhere the purple bindweed
Spread its quietly tightening strands.

Beautiful, but now despisèd,
For the swamp has dangerous grown,
I am Rahab, shameless harlot,
Used and paid . . . but never known.

II.

True, the parched road knows no ending,
And the sun no pity shows,
Yet the wondrous eyes of Rahab
Feast on everlasting snows.

Hark to the song of the harlot
As she sits 'neath the vineladen archway,
Bold-faced, inviting, and cool:
' Let him that is foolish come hither,
Oh, come to my bosom, thou fool! '

Very beautiful was Rahab the harlot
As she sat at the door in the sunlight,
In the sunlight which fell in patches;
For the gourd was greedy of sunlight,
Which it hoarded in golden globes.

FROM A HOSPITAL IN SUEZ

OH, Sister, I was dreaming . . .
Why must I always wake
To pain beyond all seeming,
To thirst that naught can slake?

I heard the bluebells pealing,
They told of gipsy camps,
And brown-faced boys came stealing
Through evening mists and damps.

I roamed through English meadows
With fat, well-liking kine,
The elm-trees threw long shadows
And much-loved eyes sought mine. . . .

Then, later, it was morning,
The sun's first scented kiss,
The blackbird shrilled her warning,
And I awoke . . . to this. . . .

Oh, Sister, shall I ever
Again see cloud-flecked skies?
Oh, Sister, shall I never . . . ?
Oh, God, these cursèd flies!

I AM LONELY

I AM lonely, I am lonely . . .
But my Love comes not to me.
Oh, if only, oh, if only
I knew where she might be.

If only I could find her,
I fear nor heaven nor hell,
With my own arms I'd bind her;
I have so much to tell.

I've waited, Love, I've waited,
God knows I have been true.
Oh, hide from me no longer,
You know not what you do.

I am lonely, I am lonely . . .
But my Love comes not to me.
Oh, if only, oh, if only
I knew where she might be. . . .

THE LADY-COMPANION

DOWN, down the dreary vista
Of unimagined years
My grief-cracked soul is shrinking
Before a fate which leers;
A fate which leers and beckons,
And shouts, with hideous glee,
That life-long bonds are broken
And I at last am free.
Stripped of the dear encumbrance
And oft regretted ties,
Stark from all petty grievance
The naked future lies.

E'en now the knell is striking
The hour of thy release—
Up then, my soul, and welcome
Thy long desirèd peace.
Oh, Life, you are a mocker
And this your cruellest shaft:
The prison door is open—
I only feel the draught.

DEPRESSION

ON and ever on ran the railing,
Each grey bar thicker than my wrist,
Towering above me in the twilight
Of the dawnless terror of a lost soul.
Each gasping, sobbing furlong
Bludgeoned a life-stricken hope,
Featureless offspring of an ever-weakening spirit,
Before a further vista
Of unchanging bars.
Ever the railing continued,
And, as I battled frantically on
Through that colourless fog,
Through that stifling spaciousness,
The ghastly truth
Whipped my numbed spirit into spasms
Of unutterable anguish,

Crying out that the railing,
In inconceivable loneliness,
Ran on through the sinking silence
Of a shadowless eternity.

THE SPINSTER

ART waiting, Love, art waiting
In some Elysian field
Where the cedars swing their cradles
And the poplars gently yield?

For me a barren autumn
Brings home its empty cart;
Say, Love, will dying winter leave
A spring when none shall part?

Around me in the twilight
The memoried breezes play
With whispered, soft caresses,
All bleeding sweet as hay.

But oh, the days are weary,
And oh, the nights are long;
My path lies through the wilderness
Unhelped by tree or song.

Then welcome, white-haired stranger,
Whose chill, mysterious art
Alone can still the aching
Of a too hungry heart.

IT'S PEERING AT THE WINDOW

IT'S peering at the window . . .
It's groping at the door . . .
I dare not look behind me . . .
What use to stare before?

It chased me round the corners
And up the ill-lit stair;
Knowing I can't escape it
It's hesitating there. . . .

Why can't it get it over? . . .
Have you cowered beneath a rod?
Have you shrunk from flying bullets?
Have you known the fear of God?

Don't tell me it's only fancy . . .
Have you fled on a moonlit night
From hedges that rustled and chased you
And birds that shared your fright?

I tell you I daren't look behind me . . .
No wonder that shadow's odd . . .
It's coming, my God, it's coming . . .
Oh God, oh God, oh God! . . .

THE MASTER IN HIS GARDEN

THE Master in his garden
Worked on with patient hand,
But the flowers that grew in the garden,
They could not understand.

He cut back the healthy laurel,
He spared not the fruitful vine,
Yet on sickly and discontented herbs
He poured forth sparkling wine. . . .

Ever the goodliest offshoots
Fell to the Master's knife,
And the bleeding plants could not believe
When he spoke of a broader life.

The shameful earth-loving branches
With blossom soiled and broken,
The Master raised and gently propped,
With a sad word left unspoken.

The rose that with infinite yearning
Had clambered up the wall
To shake out its robes in the glorious light
Was found to have grown too tall. . . .

The Master in his garden
Works on with patient hand,
But the flowers that grow in the garden,
They cannot understand.

THE STARS IN CROWDED LONELINESS

THE stars in crowded loneliness
Dance on through all eternity. . . .
What is that to me?

The priest, the harlot, and the child
Still mock Life's coarse paternity. . . .
What is that to me?

The toothache-racked philosopher,
The ' Save yourself ' religious quack,
The silver-table's shamelessness,
Knowledge astride the slum-child's back. . . .
What are these to me?

Go, build your Babels and rejoice your God
With thought of You, saved for the double ever;
Leave me to learn the message of the sod:
To live and love awhile without being clever.

1916

VIA CRUCIS

'LORD JESUS of the trenches,
Calm 'midst the bursting shell,
We met with Thee in Flanders,
We walked with Thee in hell;
O'er Duty's blood-soaked tillage
We strewed our glorious youth;
Yes, we indeed have known Thee,
For us the Cross is Truth.

Allow us to return, then,
And teach them, in their pain,
That only through sacrifice
Shall soul meet soul again;
Come victory or failure,
To leave it all to Thee,
For soul was never vanquished
By nailing to a tree.'
Gently the Saviour answered:
'Let not your spirits grieve,
But though from death returned ye
Yet would they not believe.

'Down on your knees, My people,
My people, kneel and pray.
No longer sadden heroes
Who cast their lives away,
Who died that ye might conquer,
Whose sacrifice is vain
Unless a chastened people
Turn to their God again.'

'Lord God, before Thy footstool
A humbled people kneel;
We knew we were true metal,
We thought that we were steel,
And we forgot the furnace,
Forgot the Cross, our plea,
Forgot that we were strengthless

Till tempered, Lord, by Thee;
Forgot that all our virtues
Are but as filthy rags,
Counted our strength in armies,
Our wealth in money-bags. . . .
Lord God, we own our folly,
And Thou wilt hear our prayer;
Lord God, accept our sacrifice,
And in Thy mercy spare.'

ON READING 'OSCAR WILDE AND MYSELF,' BY LORD A. DOUGLAS

COMPLAINS the pebble of the crinkling wave?
I have not time—I have not time.
One ant is prodigal and one would save?
I have not time—I have not time.
'Still, wait and hear the crooked tree explain
How struggling lightwards it made naught of pain' . . .
I have not time—I have not time.
'Have you no balsam, then, for slandered youth?
Will you not bind the bleeding limbs of truth?'
I have not time—I have not time.
My oceans roll and crash throughout the world,

My forests rise anew in every land,
Truth through a thousand changing forms is whirled,
And every hour infinity is spanned.
Have I, then, time?

ON HEARING A LADY IN PINK AT THE IMPERIAL HOTEL, BOURNEMOUTH, SING 'GO, PRETTY ROSE'

(*Written on the back of a programme*)

GO, pretty rose.
Nobody knose
Where the rose gose!
Somewhere there grose
And the wind blose
Of roses rose
Which some one hose
And later mose
Or we'll suppose
The whole a pose.
The singer's tose
Are wrapped in hose
Of colour rose.
The singer's fose
With upturned nose,
Forgetting wose,
Indulge in dose.

MUSICAL COMEDY

Indictment.

EVERYONE talks and everyone eats,
Taxis, tickets, programmes, seats;
Life is young and the day is old,
Dinner was good, the wines were bold.

Lost in a whirl of sensuous charm,
Curving leg and rippling arm,
Low-cut dresses and dancing light,
Maddening peeps of creamy white.

Dizzied by warm, voluptuous air,
Pulsing blood and velvet chair,
Questioning eyes their answer found:
That's the way the world goes round.

Defence.

Never yet the man but meets
Petty worries, small defeats,
Since old Adam, overbold,
Doomed mankind to slave for gold.

Rivalled Godhead's ruffled calm
Breathed forth throne-securing harm,
Yet, to ease Man's sorry plight,
Ordered toil to cease at night;

Giving Man, to kennel Care,
Dances, songs, and faces fair,
And to quiet that ill-bred hound,
Playful music's healthy sound.

Summing up.

Puris omnia pura.

1914

THE wicked nation that provoked this war,
Though with stiff neck she fight, yet shall she cower;
The fighting may be long, the struggle sore:
We are the one unconquerable Power.

'God and my strong right arm!' declaimed the foe.
What blasphemy! We scorned its hideousness,
And that we were not tainted all might know,
Against his God put our self-righteousness.

The struggle may be sore, the fighting long,
But righteousness is in itself a tower,
And we are right, and they, O God, are wrong:
We are the one unconquerable Power.

LORD, TEACH US HOW TO LIVE

LORD, teach us how to live . . .
These days are weary wise;
Our paths are choked with rubbish,
Our lanthorn clogged with flies.

Lord, teach us how to live . . .
The lanthorn's flicker dies;
Man builds himself a golden cage
And then puts out his eyes.

Lord, teach us how to live . . .
Thou taught'st the sun to rise . . .
And Thou to leaf the bursting tree . . .
And Thou the bird the skies. . . .

FROM A BASE HOSPITAL IN FRANCE

CHRIST! I am blind! God give me strength to bear
That which I most have dreaded all my days:
The palsied shuffling, grasping air,
The moving prison five foot square,
The haunting step that isn't there—
These pictures dance before my sightless gaze. . . .

AUSTRALIA'S PRAYER

Gallipoli evacuated, December 20th, 1915.

JEHOVAH, Lord of all Gethsemanes,
Of thorn-crowned Truth and broken Purposes,
Our stricken motherhood, our tortured brain,
Shrill with the piercing cry, 'Is it in vain?'

No dream of conquest, no mad lust for power,
Found us at England's side in danger's hour,
The Bays of Suvla and of Anzac prove
The strong example of that Greater Love.

Gladly we gave the noblest of our youth
To fight for England and, we thought, for
Truth;
Now we are weaker, numbed with constant
pain—
Is it in vain, Lord God, is it in vain?

Out of the rending silence God replied:
'You ask the triumph I My Son denied.
Have faith, poor soul. Is not all history
Triumphant failure, empty victory?'

TWO WOUND-STRIPES

THESE are the words of Isaac,
Isaac the sacrifice,
What time his milk-white manhood
Had shouldered faggots thrice:

Father, how far that morning
When first I climbed this hill,
Thy sad foreboding scorning,
'To live is Jah His will.'

But Jevah's hand was heavy,
Demanding sacrifice,
Vast was the foeman's levy,
His boasting cleft the skies.

Right proudly I as guerdon
Descended from Youth's throne,
Took up Death's heavy burden
And laid me on the stone.

I'd challenge Fear's twin brother
From off ten thousand rocks
To guard thy tents, my mother,
Father, to shield thy flocks. . . .

But now my blood runs slower,
I climb the hill, for what?
To punish Gomorrah and Zoar
By filching the lands of Lot!

Twice on the reeking altar
The knife has laid me low;
Father, I would not falter,
But—is it far to go? . . .

Thesis.

1915

'THAT the acceptance of the possibility of a divergence between the Divine Will and the National purpose is not incompatible with the fulfilment of the duties of a Recruiting Sergeant.'

Argument.

A PRAYER

MAKER of systems, Universal God,
In whose Fantasia e'en this sun-tied world
May sound its full and all-perfecting chord,
Grant, if our whilom nation's overthrow
Be part of Thy great re-creative plan,
That every man may drain the cup. If so . . .
Thy Will be done.

Conclusion.

A justification for taking as a guiding principle in life—

' Doe ye nexte thynge.'

1916

SEE on the wall in fiery letters writ:
'How shows the nation in this hour of stress?'
Our prelates at reprisal meetings sit,
Our prophets pander to the halfpenny press.

Our poets—well, we have none; and our priests
A double income drain from Church and State.
The foe is at the gate; the city feasts—
With fur and feathers at the usual rate.

THE CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR

I LOSE myself in Thee,
And, losing, am the gainer;
True love must reckless be—
Could Christ Himself speak plainer?

My wealth, ambitions, all
I leave beside Thine altar;
My world to Thee in thrall
I place yet do not falter.

This only plea is mine:
When, loved ones me reviling,
I drain Thy bitter wine,
Let me not see Thee smiling.

WHEN I WAS YOUNG

WHEN I was young the mountains
Beckoned and called to me:
'Come, come, taste purer fountains
Than in the valley be.'

I spent my youth in scaling
Each summit bleak and bare;
Oh, labour unavailing!
I found no fountains there!

'The streamlet by my cottage?'
'Too late,' the dead years cry—
'Who spurns the mess of pottage
Unsatisfied must die.'

THE HERETIC

(A Fragment)

NOT face to face, O God, not face to face!
Still let the shimmering mantle of Thy grace
Fall in between!

How vain to wrestle with my Sovereign Lord!
Who shall escape that fearful doom—His Word
Too clearly seen?

. . . . . .

Out to the desert, I, my virtues notwithstanding!

. . . . . .
And that lovebriar whose crimsoned tangle
mocks
The stumbling tread of pathless wandering.
And these Thy saints, my loved and loving
ones,
Who by accepted paths may come to Thee—
Alas, how rudely must their staying hands
Be thrust aside!

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